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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 001129

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SUBJECT: FORMER DPP CHAIRMAN LIN I-HSIUNG ON DOMESTIC
POLITICS

REF: 06 TAIPEI 2543

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Former DPP Chairman and respected party elder Lin I-hsiung told the Director on May 16 that, despite a contentious presidential primary, the DPP will rally behind candidate Frank Hsieh. Lin predicted Hsieh will beat KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou in the 2008 presidential election, because, in Lin's view, the Taiwanese majority in the KMT do not identify with Ma and furthermore the KMT has resisted democratization and localization since becoming the opposition party in 2000. Lin hoped that the new president, either Hsieh or Ma, will improve political cooperation by serving as president of all the people rather than as a party leader in confrontation with other parties. Lin believed that President Chen forced out Premier Su Tseng-chang for his own political purposes, as he had previously forced out his other premiers. Lin argued that an effective referendum law would strengthen Taiwan's democracy, ending the recurrent stalemates in the Legislative Yuan (LY), as contentious issues could be submitted directly to the people for decision. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In a meeting with the Director on May 16, former DPP Chairman and party elder Lin I-hsiung predicted that DPP candidate Frank Hsieh will win the 2008 presidential election against the KMT's Ma Ying-jeou. Lin noted he had met with Hsieh the previous day, but added he had no plans to join Hsieh's campaign. Members of the public like himself should avoid direct involvement in the inter-party fray, Lin observed. During the campaign season he planned to urge political leaders to move toward greater cooperation in the future. Noting that the KMT has a strong organization at the local level, Lin predicted that it will do better than the DPP in the upcoming Legislative Yuan (LY) elections. He also thought that the reduction in number of legislators and shift to single representative districts should improve the overall quality of legislators.

¶3. (C) Lin expressed hope the current level of intense confrontation between the KMT and DPP would ease after the presidential election. The Central Election Commission (CEC) should not be a major issue, Lin observed, but the KMT and DPP are treating it as such to gain political advantage for

themselves in the presidential election. Lin hoped that Hsieh or Ma, whoever was elected, would serve as a president of all the people rather than as the leader of one political party in confrontation with another. The DPP and KMT share common views on many policy issues, Lin observed. Therefore the two parties should be able to work together in the Legislative Yuan (LY), as Frank Hsieh has suggested. While DPP and KMT ideals and ultimate goals differ, their positions on maintaining the current status quo and not allowing Taiwan to be ruled by China are similar, Lin added.

14. (C) Democratization and localization have been the two main political trends in Taiwan over the last two decades, Lin observed. Former KMT President Lee Teng-hui supported these trends, but since losing power in 2000, the KMT leadership has resisted democratization and localization. However, continuously confronting the DPP in the LY and blocking the annual budget has hurt rather than helped the KMT politically, Lin argued. Ma Ying-jeou represents the aging Mainlander wing of the KMT, which dominates the party's top ranks, but the local level Taiwanese party leaders and members do not identify with Ma. Asked about KMT LY Speaker Wang Jin-pyng's difficult relations with Ma, Lin speculated that Wang is waiting for a possible opportunity in case Ma is convicted in his trial for corruption. While Ma may be convicted for violating the law in his use of the Taipei mayoral special funds, this is a problem with the system rather than corruption, Lin suggested, adding that many other officials could face the same problem.

15. (C) Referring to Premier Su's rather abrupt resignation, Lin said there was no need for President Chen to change the premier at this time. The DPP has a strong tradition of

TAIPEI 00001129 002 OF 003

lining up behind its candidates, and Su would have worked with primary winner Frank Hsieh. In this case as before, Lin observed, President Chen had wanted to change the premier for his own political purposes. None of Chen's many changes of premier had been warranted by the political situation confronting the premier. Lin believed President Chen would work with Hsieh in the interests of winning the presidential election, but acknowledged Chen might promote some fundamentalist ideas to gain Deep Green votes. Despite Chen's past "surprises," he is not an extremist, Lin argued, citing the moderation apparent in Chen's 2000 presidential campaign.

16. (C) Lin said he did not see a need for hasty action in removing statues of Chiang Kai-shek. The truth about Taiwan's history needs to be brought out. Gradually, when a broad public consensus emerges, then it will be possible to make decisions about issues such as how to view Chiang Kai-shek.

17. (C) The ongoing turmoil between the KMT and DPP in the Legislative Yuan shows that Taiwan needs further work to make its democracy effective, Lin said. Taiwan should have a government system that is clearly either parliamentary or presidential, with appropriate political mechanisms to resolve differences or stalemates. Lin added that he favored a parliamentary system. In addition, Taiwan should have a workable referendum law to replace the current restrictive law that the KMT designed to make referendums difficult. If the political parties in the LY reach an impasse, then the issue should be submitted directly to a popular referendum. Lin predicted that having an effective referendum law would greatly reduce legislative stalemates. On sensitive issues, such as those involving sovereignty, the referendum threshold could be set high, 70 or even 80 percent, to prevent ill-considered moves that could provoke cross-Strait tensions.

18. (C) The DPP states its goals, Lin said, and the KMT should not be afraid of saying its goal is unification. It should make the case to the people what benefits unification

would bring, for example, peace and expanded business or other opportunities on the mainland. China should also explain the benefits of unification to the people of Taiwan. (Comment: Lin's point seemed to be that the people of Taiwan will be able to make rational choices about their future in a peaceful atmosphere and democratic process if they are given the information they need to make such choices. End Comment.)

¶9. (C) Beijing has adopted the wrong strategy toward Taiwan, Lin argued. Instead of resorting to counterproductive threats, China should focus on attracting Taiwan. China is like Taiwan 30 years ago. Those responsible for Taiwan policy have a "China Chauvinist Mentality," and moderates do not dare challenge them. PRC hardliners are mistaken to claim that Taiwan is a base for U.S. imperialism. China's influence in Taiwan will far outweigh that of the U.S. if cross-Strait relations are good, Lin suggested. Lin agreed with the Director that China is likely to change politically over time in a democratic direction.

Comment

¶10. (C) Lin is highly respected for his idealism about democracy and for his serenity in the face of deep personal tragedy. While a political prisoner during authoritarian times, Lin's mother and two of his young daughters were murdered on the highly symbolic date of February 28 in what is widely believed to have been a politically motivated killing that has never been solved. Lin has generally avoided partisan politics since leaving the DPP in early 2006 over his frustration and disappointment with party leaders, but he did put in brief appearances late in the campaigns of his friends Chen Chu and Frank Hsieh when they were running for mayor in Kaohsiung and Taipei last December. We would not be surprised to see Lin make a similar appearance on behalf of Frank Hsieh's presidential campaign.

TAIPEI 00001129 003 OF 003

YOUNG